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Slander and the CIA

Speaking of undercover agents, the Central Intelligence Agency has a different form of problem on its hands. As a result of a conflict among Estonian emigres, a leader of one faction undertook a slander suit against another Estonian residing here who had accused him of being a Soviet agent. The CIA has now acknowledged that the target of the suit is one of its operatives. It has in effect contended that anything he said was delivered in the line of duty and that he should therefore be spared the ordeal of a trial in which CIA methods might be awkwardly unfolded.

We claim no special knowledge about the merits of the case. But we strongly support the view of Judge Roszel Thomsen

that the complainant has a right to his day in court.

"You are not going to persuade this court that there is anyone in this country who does not have some rights," he told the defendant's attorneys as they sought to use their client's CIA affiliation as a basis for "absolute immunity."

Inevitably such a trial will offer some glimpse of the nature of CIA's involvements in the politics of Estonia. We doubt that such disclosures could jeopardize our national security. They might even give our free society some basis for evaluating that invisible super-government known as the CIA.